



Newport City Council School Reorganisation Proposal Objection Report

**Proposal to establish a new primary school on the
Glan Llyn development with effect from September 2019**

Background

This report is published in line with the requirements of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the School Organisation Code July 2013 and includes a summary of the objections received against the statutory proposal and the Council's response to these objections.

Statutory Proposal

The Council published a statutory proposal on 28th February 2018 until 28th March 2018 to establish a new English-medium community-maintained primary school on the Glan Llyn development for pupils aged between 3 years and 11 years.

A period of consultation was undertaken before deciding to publish this proposal. A consultation report, containing a summary of the issues raised by consultees and the Council's response, is available on the Newport City Council website.

The consultation report made reference to the latest pupil projection estimates which indicated that in January 2019 there would be a surplus of approximately 105 places across the English-medium, Welsh-medium and Voluntary Aided schools in the denoted local cluster areas after taking account of the predicted yield from the new housing development.

As a result, the report recommended that permission be sought to move the proposal forward by publishing a statutory notice which outlined a modified implementation date of 1st September 2019, and this was approved and published as so. This deferred opening date would enable a longer timeframe for the effective establishment of the new school in terms of the appointment of staff and the procurement of resources.

The statutory proposal was published on the Newport City Council website and copies were displayed in the local area served by the school, including at the two sales offices on the development. Details confirming publication of the notice were also shared with all stakeholders as outlined in the statutory School Organisation Code, and the occupied dwellings on the Glan Llyn development.

Objections to the Proposal and the LA responses

15 objections were lodged during the statutory notice stage, 13 of which were from residents of the development outlining concerns over the delayed implementation. The remaining two objections were from stakeholders within the Welsh-medium education sector who raised concerns regarding the proposed language provision.

Delayed implementation

The specific points that were raised referred to:

- The fact that the potential delay was not included as an option in the original consultation and therefore it was unfair of the Council to introduce this at the statutory notice stage;
- The build programme was already at an advanced stage and thus it is likely that the completed school will remain empty for up to one academic year;
- A lack of continuity of provision for pupils;
- The distance and journey times associated with travel to alternative schools;
- Special considerations that should be afforded for affected pupils in relation to the Council's School Admissions and Home to School Transport policies.

LA Response: It is correct that a delayed implementation was not included as an option within the formal consultation document, as the initial intention was to establish the school from September 2018. However following the end of the formal consultation period, consideration of the latest pupil projection estimates available at that time indicated that

there was a sufficiency of places within the local area to support a deferred implementation date.

The recent experiences of the Council in opening a new school supports the need for, where possible, a longer timeframe for the effective establishment of the school in terms of the appointment of staff and the procurement of resources. The latest information from the developer has confirmed that the building will be handed over to the Council at the end of August 2018. This date does not however include a contingency for any issues that may arise in the latter part of programme. This would not provide the Council with sufficient time to enable the necessary furniture, fixtures and equipment works (FF&E) to be facilitated before the start of the academic year. This work will now be planned for the autumn term 2018. The Council will be responsible for all costs associated with securing the building in the period between handover and the opening of the school.

When the new school opens, parents will of course be able to apply for their children to attend and this may include transferring them from existing schools. There will however be no mandatory requirement for such transfers to take place – this will be solely in accordance with parental preference. Where children are settled in other schools and parents would prefer them to continue to attend these provisions, the Council will not require children living on the development to move to their new catchment school. Any applications for admission that are received however will be assessed in accordance with the published School Admissions Policy and there is no intention to amend this to make specific reference to children resident at Glan Llyn. In accordance with this policy, parents can express a preference for any school, but there is no guarantee of admission to the chosen school, even if it is the catchment school. Admission to the school will be made in accordance with parental preference, subject to availability. Where a school is oversubscribed, preference requests will still be considered, but the Council's over-subscription criteria will be applied to determine priority. Priority will be afforded to children confirmed as living in the school catchment area at the time of application. There is however no guaranteed admission for any child regardless of circumstances.

The Council's Home to School Transport policy provides free transport to primary aged pupils who live 2 miles or more from their catchment school, or their nearest available school. This accords with the statutory limits outlined in the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure. At present, the nearest available English-medium primary school to the homes of the Glan Llyn development is Lliswerry Primary School, calculated as being less than 2 miles away. As outlined above, parents can express a preference for any school but if they choose to send their child to a school that is not the catchment or nearest school, they will be responsible for all transport costs and arrangements. In determining distances and eligibility for free home to school transport applications, distances are measured as the shortest available walking route where possible, using official routes known as the Safe Walking Network. The council deems that a route is 'available' if a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk to school in reasonable safety, and it is for individual parents, not the council, to determine whether the child needs accompanying. It is inevitable that traffic will be heavy across the city at the start and end of the school day, but there is a high density of primary schools across the City to support easy access to provision in the majority of instances.

Language provision

Two objections were received which referred to the following points:

- That the pre-consultation was not sufficiently extensive and lacked credibility;
- That the consultation document was prepared without due diligence, and;
- That the proposal to establish an English-medium school does not serve to promote access to Welsh-medium education.

LA Response: Whilst the informal pre-consultation survey was carried out which enabled the Council to gather the views of the existing Glan Llyn residents, this was not the only evidence used to determine the language medium of the proposed new school. Alongside this direct stakeholder feedback, one Welsh-medium primary school - Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd - is just over 2 miles from the proposed new school and at the time of consultation there were vacancies in all year groups from Reception to Year Six across the Welsh-medium primary school estate.

Whilst spaces also exist in English-medium schools in the vicinity, the percentage of surplus places is lower in the English-medium estate as a whole. This is evidenced by the fact that there are currently 13% of surplus places available in Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd compared to only 9% across the English-medium estate in all primary schools across the east of the city. As a result, a decision was taken to evidence the English-medium schools in the locality.

In terms of longer term objectives, Newport City Council's own Welsh Language Strategy 2017-2022 commits to increasing the percentage of pupils in Welsh-medium education from 4% to 5% over the next four years.

Given that the proposed school will be English medium, rather than Welsh, this development will not make a meaningful contribution to achieving the target set by either Welsh Government or the Local Authority in this instance. The development is however within close proximity to Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd where there are currently surplus places.

Whilst the proposed designation of this new primary school as an English-medium provision means that the authority will not be making a positive contribution to meeting the Welsh Government target at this time, the Council is committed through the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to scope the need for Welsh-medium provision in relation to all future new school builds. All future scoping exercises will be extended to beyond the immediate area of the developments.

Recommendations

It is recommended that this proposal be moved forward to the final determination stage. Since objections were received during the statutory proposal stage however, this decision will need to be taken by the Council's Cabinet acting as the Local Determination Panel, and this will be tabled for the meeting scheduled to take place in May 2018.

In accordance with the School Organisation Code (2013) this report is published electronically on Newport City Council's website at www.newport.gov.uk

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